

**Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Evan Ryan's Remarks at the Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network 2016  
Youth Activism Conference**

**April 8, 2016**

**A/S Ryan:** Thank you all so much. I'm so glad to be here with you. I've been looking forward to this trip for a while, and to being here with you at the conference.

I had the opportunity yesterday to meet with some of the alumni who helped organize this conference and I know it's such a dynamic group and it will be a very exciting several days in front of you here.

So for years I've heard about the dynamic alumni network here. In fact, during Prime Minister Sharif's visit to Washington in the fall, even President Obama, as we've already heard, talked about PUAN. [Applause]. I look forward to going back to Washington and telling Secretary Kerry and President Obama that I was here with PUAN and the wider alumni network.

I would like to thank Alvina Ahmad and Aqdas Takreem for introducing me; to Faisal Malik for so ably representing the entire PUAN network; and to Professor Pervez Hoodbhuy for those wonderful remarks that he just delivered to us; and for your support of our alumni.

With nearly 65 percent of the population in Pakistan under the age of 30, investing in young people is critical to Pakistan's future. As youth leaders from Pakistan and from the region, you all play a crucial role in inspiring people across the region to give back to their communities. Through your service and dedication to your countries, you will keep each of your countries on the road to becoming economic leaders and the key to a prosperous, secure South Asia.

Over the last decade we have put an incredible investment into Pakistan's youth. We invest more money in the Fulbright program in Pakistan than in any other country in the world. [Applause].

You have one of the largest cohorts of the global undergraduate exchange program, what we call UGRAD, and the English Access language program is also one of the largest in the world. [Applause].

For the last several years we have sent 1,300 Pakistanis to the United States on exchange programs every year. Additionally, thousands of students across Pakistan have graduated from the English Access Language Program. [Applause]. Do you think those are English Access alumni?

Why do we invest so much in educational exchanges in Pakistan? As President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif said last October, a

resilient U.S.-Pakistan partnership is vital to regional and global peace and security. We share a mutual commitment to democracy and we are committed to expanding the bilateral relationship in a number of arenas from education, science and technology, to economic growth and regional integration.

Last year we established a new U.S.-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor. In addition to our 20 ongoing university partnerships, we launched three new university centers for advanced studies in Agriculture, Energy and Water Research.

To build on our longstanding cooperation in basic education, we also launched the Let Girls Learn initiative in Pakistan which will provide 200,000 Pakistani girls access to education.  
[Applause].

Pakistan sits at the heart of a dynamic and important region. The Asia Pacific region including South Asia and Pakistan is home to nearly half the world's population and over half of global trade and economic output. South Asian countries are growing quickly and there are incredible opportunities in areas from entrepreneurship, technology and innovation, to empowering women and girls. With these enormous economic and social opportunities, South Asia is also facing some of the world's toughest challenges.

We were reminded just last month with the horrendous bombing at a park in Lahore that Pakistan still has some ways to go to combat violent extremism. As President Obama told Prime Minister Sharif, this callous and appalling attack against innocent civilians, many of them women and children, underscores the critical danger that terrorism poses inside Pakistan throughout the region and around the globe.

Countries and leaders across the region have an important part in solving these difficult questions along with other global challenges of our time, like fighting climate change and preserving the environment.

Those of you in the room today will play a key role in these efforts to shape a bright and stable future for yourselves and for others.

So I'm so excited to see several alumni from around the region joining you for the conference this weekend. At the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs my mandate is to use people to people exchange programs like UGRAD, Study of the U.S. Institute, and English Access to build peaceful relations between the people of the United States and people of other countries.

This weekend's conference takes our public diplomacy levels a step further by using the same sort of people to people

initiatives to connect individuals in the region to each other. So I hope all of you will use this opportunity to connect, to learn from each other and to be inspired from each other.

This weekend you will have the chance to learn from the best leaders in their fields. From storytelling and visual diplomacy, to fundraising and social entrepreneurship. You will take home new skills that will help you advance important causes within your own communities.

I would like to highlight some alumni among many who are doing amazing work.

Ms. Farheen Naveed who went through the International Visitor Leadership Program and is an alumna as a Humphrey Fellow, is the Chair of the Pakistan Youth Congress and a Founding Director of the Drug-Free Pakistan Foundation which started four residential treatment hospitals and a drug prevention research center.

Alumni who traveled to the United States as students are also doing very exciting work. In February and then again yesterday I got to meet the team of remarkable students from Lahore University of Management Sciences who won the final competition of the Peer to Peer, what we call PTP Challenging Extremism program which promotes the development of anti-extremism campaigns by digital experts from around the world. I'm pretty

sure they're here. Mohammad Usman, Sandy Nohre, Ty More. I saw Ty More, their faculty advisor. So the alums did a wonderful job at the State Department, such a wonderful job that they won the entire competition and they're doing very exciting work. I encourage you all to take a look at their web site and to see their campaign. I know that you'll be inspired.

I know all of you are on Facebook and Twitter, is that right?

**Audience:** Yes.

**A/S Ryan:** Are you on Instagram?

**Audience:** Yes.

**A/S Ryan:** I just joined Instagram. I'm late to the game, I know, but I just joined Instagram so I invite you to follow me @EvanMRyan, so I'd love to connect with you on Instagram too. But I invite you all to continue to use these tools. Social media as we know is very powerful. It's an important medium. It's changing the world. So stay connected with one another through social media. And I know you'll learn about new tools this weekend as well that you can use.

As a team, I know that you'll be able to do so much more than you could ever do on your own. Things that you can do to help your

communities, to help your countries and my colleagues at the embassy remain eager to support you through initiatives like the Alumni Small Grants Program and Chapter activities. So please stay connected to the embassy as well.

Before I conclude, I just want to give all of you a big round of applause for the work that you're doing, for being here and taking the time to be here, and convening and working on these issue together. So thank you all for joining us. [Applause].

And in listening to Professor Hoodbhuy which really were wonderful remarks, and looking out at all of you who are now international -- you've all been alumni of our programs, you've traveled to the United States, you've come home, you're change makers in your communities and your countries, and seeing you all here today and knowing how committed you are, and you're focused on these challenges that lay before you, you remind me of someone back home in Washington and that was someone who studied overseas, was inspired by what he learned overseas, decided he was going to remain engaged internationally, came back to the United States, became a community organizer, did a lot of work in his community, then decided to run for office and is now our President, President Obama. [Applause].

So I do want to leave you with that because you all inspire me and you inspire me the way he's inspired so many people. Because

as I look at you I know this much -- all of you have done what you've done, you've traveled to the u, taken on that huge challenge and adventure, learned new skills, met people, connected, coming home and staying connected as alumni which is so important to us, I know that you're capable of anything. So I feel very hopeful about the future of Pakistan and the future of the region.

Thanks to all of you who are in this room. I wish you the best of luck and I hope you enjoy the conference. Thank you very much. [Applause].

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